



Marine Life Management Act FAQs

Question: What is the Marine Life Management Act?

Answer: In 1998, the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA), also known as AB1241, or the Keeley Bill after its author, was passed by the California Legislature and signed into law. In 1999, the state provided \$5.2 million in funding to begin full implementation of the new legislation. The MLMA opened a new era in the management and conservation of all living marine resources in California. The act's overriding goal is to ensure the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of California's living marine resources, including the conservation of healthy and diverse marine ecosystems.

Question: How will the MLMA be implemented?

Answer: The MLMA requires all of us to take new approaches to the formidable task of conserving the state's marine life and stewardship of healthy fisheries. To achieve this goal, new conservation measures and management plans for the state's fisheries will ensue. And fisheries managers will use the best available science and take stock of the effectiveness of programs. The MLMA also calls for involving "all interested parties" in making decisions regarding living marine resources.

Question: How will these management decisions be made and who will be involved?

Answer: The MLMA calls for informed citizen involvement by all Californians who benefit from the state's marine resources. DFG will foster key relationships with constituents, including consumptive and non-consumptive users, to help guide management decisions. Hopefully this process will garner constituent support for new management decisions and ultimately, ensure that marine resources remain intact. Stakeholders are key players in this new management system. Knowing and understanding the expectations of constituents is critical when determining the most appropriate long-term objectives for the state's fisheries. To better facilitate DFG's efforts to engage the public in developing fishery management plans, a public outreach team was composed to garner support.

Question: What is a "fishery management plan" ?

Answer: A fishery management plan (FMP) is a document that describes the nature and problems of a fishery and offers regulatory recommendations to manage that

fishery. In essence, it is a planning document that contains all the necessary information to make informed decisions on fishing opportunities that are geared toward maintaining sustainable marine resources. A fishery management plan is the vehicle used for a comprehensive approach to managing marine resources. Under the MLMA, fishery management plans will provide:

- Biological information about the marine resources under consideration
- Habitat needs and issues
- User groups and their fishing practices
- Conservation and management measures already in place
- The ecological role of the resource
- The environmental effects that might have to be considered
- The most appropriate management tools

These FMPs are based on the best scientific data and relevant information available. Fishery management plans are required to allocate any increases or decreases in allowable catches fairly between commercial and recreational users.

Question: What is the "Master Plan"?

Answer: The Master Plan is literally a "road map" to how California fisheries will be managed. Specifically, the Master Plan will include: a prioritized list of fisheries in need of fishery management plans; a process for how the public may be involved in developing fishery management and research plans; a description of the essential fishery information that will be needed to effectively manage the top priority fisheries; and a process of how these various plans will be amended or revised. The Master Plan is a first step in making clear and explicit, the complex process of fisheries management.

Question: How has the Marine Life Management Act changed the responsibilities of the California Department of Fish and Game and the Fish and Game Commission?

Answer: Prior to the passage of the MLMA in 1998, the responsibility for managing most of California's marine resources harvested by commercial fisheries lay with the State Legislature. The Department of Fish and Game and the Fish and Game Commission managed the recreational fisheries and those commercial fisheries which had catch quotas that changed periodically. Management of commercial fisheries under this division of responsibility was complicated, piecemeal, and oftentimes untimely. Necessary regulatory changes only occurred after much political deliberation and approval by both the Assembly and the Senate. In addition, this division of authority often resulted in laws and regulations that were inappropriate for the sustainability of the resource. The MLMA transfers permanent management authority to the Fish and

Game Commission for the nearshore finfish fishery, the white seabass fishery, emerging fisheries, and other fisheries for which the Commission had some management authority prior to January 1, 1999.

Question: How is the public going to share in the responsibility of managing the living marine resources of California?

Answer: One of the changes the MLMA set into motion was to make the regulatory planning and decision-making process more open to the public. The Act instructs the Department and Commission to "involve all interested parties, including, but not limited to, individuals from the sport and commercial fishing industries, aquaculture industries, coastal and ocean tourism and recreation industries, marine conservation organizations, local governments, marine scientists and the public." To achieve this mandate several communication tools are being employed: The MLMA Evaluation Advisory Committee was created to advise the Department on implementation of all aspects of the MLMA. The Advisory Committee is composed of appointed representatives from the recreational and commercial fishing communities, the conservation and environmental community, and the scientific community. The Department and the Fish and Game Commission have made the regulatory process more accessible to their constituents by holding public meetings at several locations across the state and during hours more encouraging to public involvement. The Department and the Fish and Game Commission are using the Internet to inform more of the public about meetings and management activities in the marine environment. By making information more accessible and timely, the public may become better informed and enter into management discussions early in the processes.

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